critical digest

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Mar 20,1961 Vol XII No 52 The Weekly NYC Theatre Newsletter Digest Service-Published 52 weeks a year- $25 per year

This Week in NYC

Camelot instituted changes in its book after two weeks of re-hearsals with co-author Alan Jay Lerner. Swifter moving show is ten minutes shorter than it was at its Dec 2 debut, allowing curtain to rise at 8 40 PM instead of 8 25 PM. Bulk of the revisions are in the first act and include elimination of "Take Me to the Fair" song, the dropping of a scene showing the departure of Launcelot, and the introduction of Mordred in the first act. This week also was the sixth birthday of Lerner & Loewe's My Fair Lady.

Plays

13 Daughters to continue with $75,000 new investment from Mrs Katherine Macfie, San Francisco, obtained after closing notice posted... The Happiest Girl in the World NY debut moved from Mar 30 to Apr 3 with some new material added... 4 musicals to be presented at City Center by NY Light Opera Co- Show Boat Apr 12, South Pacfic Apr 26, Porgy &Bess May 17, Pal Joey May 31... Impulse jazz revue due Apr 1 at Royale with 8 40 PM and 12 midnight opening performances... Kuprin adaptation by Jerome Lawrence-Robert E Lee of Maurice Edel's novel" A Call on Kuprin" to be presented May 25 by Griffith-Prince, George Abbott to direct... Julius Castro an updated version of Shakespeare's play by Gene Wessor and Will Fowler to be presented in May with Jake LaMotta.

Helen of Troy musical version adapted and directed by Albert Marre with Menasha Skulnik set for Sept by Walter Fried... The Nose of Jerry Pepper new comedy by Arnold Shulman with Milton Berle due Oct 12... A Cook for Mr. General new comedy by Steven Gethers with Bill Travers set for Oct 19 at Playhouse. ... The Gay Life a new musical by Fay and Michael Kanin-Arthur Schwartz-Howard Dietz due Nov 4, to be staged by Gerald Freedman... Tchin-Tchin adaptation of French drama by Francois Billetdoux by Arnold Shulman to be presented in Nov by Warner LeRoy.

NYC Calendar

Feast of Panthers-East 74 (334 E 74) 3/21. John Bowman-Richard Roffman present new play about Oscar Wilde by Tom Del Vecchio, directed by Bowman with Claire Luce, Byron Webster.

Ladies Night in Turkish Bath -Gould Theatre (116 Allen St) 3/ 21. Harold Lawrence presents and directs revival of 1920 farce by Avery Hopgood-Charlton Andrews.

The Square and The Old Tune -Royal (62 E 4) 3/23. Rose Lynch presents two new French plays. The first by Marguerita Duras, adapted by Ann Borchardt, the second by Robert Pinge, translated by Samuel Beckett. Directed by Steve Chernak

Broadway Business

Variety grosses report continued dip with not one show selling out and nine on twofers.

Players

Hugh Franklin replaced Melvyn Douglas, The Best Man, who left due to ulcer attacks. Tom Gorman subbed for ill Lee Tracy for several performances... Audrey Ray subbed for ill Joan Plowright, A Taste of Honey... Gerry Mulligan and band added to Impulse... Kip Hamilton to make NY debut in Donnybrook! lead... Sally Ann Howes to star in Kwamina musical next season by Richard Adler- Robert Alan Arthur.

Theatre TV Notes

Kicks & Co musical by Oscar Brown, Jr. won two hour tryout and investor audition on NBC- TV Dave Garroway this week... WNTA (NY) Play of the Week to present Waiting for Godot Apr 17 tape made last year with Zero Mostel, Burgess Meredith, Kurt Kasznar.

NY Shakespeare

Anne Fielding and Robert Jordon replaced Kathleen Widdoes and Paul Roebling in NY Shakespeare Festival school tour of Romeo & Juliet.

Off Broadway

Shows that closed include-- Walk Up after 22 performances and Five Posts in the Market Place after 9. Next production at Gate to be O Marry Me a musical version of "She Stoops to Conquer" with book and music by Lola Pergament, in Apr... The Moon in the Yellow River reopened... Under the Milkwood debut now set for Mar 29... Finch College Theatre, 52 E 78, renamed Cornelius Theatre for The Magnificent Hugo open - Apr 6... Jenny Hecht subbing for June Harding, Cry of the Raindrop, who is in Hollywood for screen test.

Hobo a new musical with book, lyrics and music by John Anthony Dooley to be presented Apr 10 at Players with Elmarie Wendell, Ron Holgate, directed by Rinaldo Capillupo... The Decameron new musical version of tales to be presented Apr 12 at East 74 by Selma Tauber-William Tarr, staged by Burry Frederick with Louis Edmonds Jan Minor.... Equity Library Theatre to present The Country Girl Mar 21-25, The Grass Harp Apr 11-16.

Theatre Book Notes

New American Library to publish paperback editions this month of --A Raisin in the Sun, Too Late the Phalarope, The Grass Harp, and Truman Capote's A Tree of Night.

Theatre Film Notes

Critic's Choice film to star Henry Fonda, directed and produced by Otto Preminger.

Theatre Magazine Notes

"Show" monthly to start in Sept, $1 per copy, published by Huntington Hartford... "Show Business Illustrated" monthly to start in fall 50c per copy published by Playboy.

Play Diary

Next Week: What a Killing-Folksbiene-3/27... Far Country-Music Box- 3/28... Under the Milkwood- Circle 3/29 ... Impulse-Royale 4/1

DIGESTS OF CURRENT NYC THEATRE REVIEWS

Big Fish, Little Fish- ANTA 3/15. 6 pro and 1 con-Mirror-filed on new comedy by Hugh Wheeler presented by Lewis Allen-Ben Edwards, staged by John Gielgud with Jason Robards, Jr, Hume Cronyn, Martin Gabel, George Grizzard, George Voskovec, Ruth White. Affirmative applauded high excellence of acting by entire cast, Gielgud's masterful direction, though they differed on quality of first script by new playwright. Sole negative agreed with colleagues on cast and direction, but feared script was contrived and turgid. Pro voter Taubman, Times, admitted author not always has steered a straight, clear course, but thought he writes of strange relationship with an integrity that is occasionally beguiling. Kerr, Herald Tribune, noted play suffered from imbalance but recommended it as chock-full of incidental plums for anyone interested in acting or the king of writing that can make the mesmerizing most of a handful of misfits. Rave notice from Chapman, News, cheered delightfully funny, uncommonly perceptive play with its silky direction and admirable cast. Watts, Post, also raved for play stunningly staged with performances approaching perfection tha. is Chekhovian in making weak and exasperating characters real and not readily forgotten. McClain, Journal American, enjoyed ticklish play done in great good taste, considerable wisdom by cast universally immaculate. Aston, World Telegram & Sun, joined majority but warned readers they must decide if they will accept a slightly pale drama for the sake of the richest 30 minutes of cutting up to be found any place in town. Dissenter Coleman, Mirror, admired new author's flair for characterization but thought his initial play contrived and as turgid as a Chekhov drama with little of the Russian's emotional churning beneath the surface. Excellent direction and cast do much to cover lapses in the script, but do not make it stimulating, Mirror man concluded.

The Devil's Advocate- Billy Rose- 3/9. 5 pros and 2 cons-Mirror, Journal American-filed on Dore Schary's adaptation of Morris L West's novel, directed and produced by Schary with Leo Genn, Sam Levene, Edward Mulhare, Eduardo Cianelli, Olive Deering, Tresa Hughes. Pros ranged from raves for production, adaptation and cast to mild approval of diverse elements. Cons differed on vote one blaming miscasting of title role, other a cumbersome script. Affirmative side headed by Taubman, Times, who recommended powerful, absorbing drama, well directed and acted with a sense of reserve, that restores one's belief in potentialities of the Broadway theatre. Kerr, Herald Tribune, found play nearly always interesting as a doissier dramatist; Schary must still pull every psychological strand into an ultimately meaningful pattern. Chapman, News, raved for lovely, engrossing drama with many performances of uncommon splendor in an inspiring drama. Watts, Post, joined applause for faithful, interesting stage adaptation of novel which is effective though it lack's stature of original. Post aisle-sitter sees chief weakness the difficulty of portraying the would-be saint in flashbacks. Aston, World Telegram & Sun, had no qualifications at all for superlative play, impeccably acted. Negative viewer Coleman, Mirror, placed blame on Genn's portrayal of title role by displaying a florid arrogance as the dying priest which should have been the cement in this glutinous story of sin and salvation but is instead jelly. McClain, Journal American, okayed individual fine acting and situations, but thought format of play with continued brief flashbacks defied the graceful telling onstage making the result cumbersome theatre.

The Importance of Being Oscar-Lyceum 3/14. 7 pros- unanimous- filed for reading of Oscar Wilde's plays, letters and poems arranged and acted by Micheal Mac Liammoir, directed by Hilton Edwards, presented by S Hurok-Roger Stevens. All shared plaudits equally between actor and material, only Journal American reviewer thought interest would be limited to Wilde fans. Taubman, Times, recommended vivid and memorable evening of theatre composed of work of impressive variety and fluidity. Kerr, Herald Tribune, is sure readers will find actor and the evening thoroughly rewarding, inspite of a few excesses of length. Chapman, News, enjoyed case presented by actor for Wilde done without effort on part of actor or audience. Coleman, Mirror, applauded acting in the grand manner, a full-blooded, witty and moving stage performance. Watts, Post, filed rave for theatre event of striking and distinguished interest and a triumph for its one man cast. Aston, WTS, okayed recitation of enormous solo of enormous value resulting in exquisite entertainment. Though McClain, Journal American, found evening richly rewarding, he approved it for Wilde fans only.

OFF

BROADWAY

WEEK

Worm in the Horseradish-Maidman 3/13. 5 con-Times, Herald Tribune, News, Post, World Telegram & Sun- and 0 pro- filed on new play by Ester Kaufman, presented by Gerald Krone-Dorothy Olim, staged by Krone with Celia Adler, Eli Mintz, Max Gulack. Actors were excused or ignored while reviewers panned script on 1906 Jewish life in NY's East Side. Taubman, Times, who did not mention actors names labeled characters mere pathetic caricatures. Crist, Herald Tribune, did think some of acting was expert but attacked trite dialogue and stock characters, refugees all from the Goldbergs. Davis, News, also skipping cast names, thought 63 year old new author had some talent for comedy, marked production and acting burlesque. Herridge, Post, thought it a poor example of a Yiddish play, that might be fine for audiences who attend amateur Yiddish plays at Folksbiene Theatre. Aston, WTS, searching for something to say concluded that the actors were grand, but the play awful.

The Kid and The Coming Forth by Day of Osiris Jones- De Lys- 3/14. 2 cons- Times, World Telegram & Sun- filed on single matinee performance of two poetic plays by Conrad Aiken, presented by NY Chapter of ANTA directed by Fred Stewart with Nan Martin, Lou Gilbert and Stewart. Calta, Times, felt that neither poem is there the movingly expressive vivid or exciting dramatic qualities to be found in "John Brown's Body." Aston, WTS, vetoed it as drama, approved of it as straight poetry reading.

A Trip to Chinatown- Lenox Hill Playhouse 3/10. Aston, World Telegram & Sun, voiced mild approval of Equity Library Theatre's one week stand of 1891 musical directed by Philip Pruneau. Critic noted that it could have been done a lot better, but even so it is beguiling, just for old times sake. Original ran 650 performances at Madison Square Theatre and contains such hits as "Chinatown", "After the Ball" and "The Bowery."

GREEN ROOM DEPARTMENT

PRO THEATRE SUBSIDY... Government subsidy and/or tax relief urged by guests of Mar "Drama Desk." T. Edward Hambleton, Phoenix Theatre, would like Javits Bill setting up a US Arts Foundation to be the first step. Stuart Vaughan, Phoenix, hopes government money would first go to the groups now presenting classics and then to those experimenting with new playwrights. HaroldPrince spoke for subsidies for the development of playwrights and actors, while his partner Robert Griffith was opposed to any subsidy plan. Griffith fears distribution of money would be in the wrong hands and the wrong people would be running it. Cuts in theatre taxes at all levels would be better.

CRITICS AT WORK... Reviewers have ignored Rhinoceros display ads and campaign against "quote" ads because they like to see their names in print, Leo Kerz told Davis, News... Trying to find a way to save wear and tear on critics covering Off Broadway, McClain, Journal American, suggests that if producers are ready to hire a union press agent the chances seem in favor of at least a semi-professional evening at work.

"MY FAIR" BIRTHDAY... Among mounds of facts and figures supplied press by publicity man Richard Maney, Chapman, News, discovered that the national company of My Fair Lady flopped in only two towns--Shreveport, La and Wichita, Kansas.

COLUMN TIPS... New theatre and "celebrity room" on east side of NYC near UN being planned by William Zeckendorf and Frank Hale, hears Mortimer, Mirror... Broadway whispers are that professional marriage of Lerner & Loewe is over, notes McHarry, News.

HOW MUCH PARK... How much of Central Park should NY Shakespeare Festival get, asks Watt, News. New amphitheatre will cut slice 15 x 200 feet from Belevedere Lake. Earlier, more modest objectives of Joe Papp's group seemed to have more appeal.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS... Permanent children's theatre-building and repertory- for Lincoln Center urged by Waring, Herald Tribune... Return of The Moon in the Yellow River offers chance for playgoers to prove its sponsors aren't overrating their good taste. reminds Watts, Post.

BEHAN BENCHED... Banning of Brendan Behan from NY St Patrick's Day parade by parade chairman Judge Comerford as a "common drunk" applauded by NY News editorial which predicts march will be better for absence of showoff whose antics frankly are threatening to become as boring as Lady Loverley's chatter or any six imitators of Edgar Bergen... McHarry, News, disagrees noting The Hostage playwright is most authentic Irish item in town and parade could use him... Behan accepted invitation to march in Jersey City, NJ, celebration.

DRAMA MAIL BOX... Times readers vote 4 pro, 1 con on Taubman's attack on twofers, the dissenter calling discount ticket users "soreheads."... News reader doubts NY License Commissioner who found nothing wrong at box offices on twofers.

PROS & CONS BY TMK

The Importance of Being Oscar is a brilliant, sympathetic dramatic tribute to Oscar Wilde by an outstanding actor-author. In the field of one-man shows usually confined to beards, padded stomachs and a pile of books, Micheal Mac Liammoir is unique because he has invented a combination reading-commentary-informal essay neatly packaged as a fascinating evening of theatre. Proving his theory that Wilde actually invented and controlled the two halfs of the 1890's he charmingly and convincingly proves his point.

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Mary, Mary is a funny, slick example of modern light comedy written by a witty lady and presented and directed by a set of expert comics. The dozens and dozens of set-up gags on contemporary subjects range from hysterically funny to bitingly witty. Another perfectly charming cast performs magic on the standard situation, characters and plot conclusion.

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The Devil's Advocate is a dull, faithful translation of the novel to drama. Almost every narrative sentence is borrowed intact, but the play is so chock full of plot that there is little room left for characterization. What was a fairly interesting clerical who-dunit turns into a clerical soap-opera plowing its way through pages of all kinds of troubles. Sam Levene and Eduardo Cianelli alone are able to infuse life and energy into their roles.

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A summer theatre that can be converted into an ice skating rink for the winter season is being planned for a Long Island, NY shopping center. While this may sound like an innovation in theatre construction, many Off Broadway theatres are just this already. Equipped with ten ton air-conditioners used only during summer intermissions (because the actors cannot be heard above them), many would make ideal practice ski runs if the scientific air-cooling system and Mother Nature would join talents.

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Though some theatre fans may have been disappointed that President Kennedy didn't attend any of the three Theatre Guild American Repertory Co presentations at the National Theatre, Washington. D. C. two weeks ago, the family's interest in drama was saved for the month by the attendance of Mrs. Kennedy at the Comedie Francaise twin bill. For the record keepers, three year old Caroline went last month to Winnie the Pooh presentation. So next month the President will have to attend the living theatre to make up for some of the foreign movies he has been visiting.

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Final word on government subsidy discussions was stated last month at ANTA Assembly by Stella Adler. Actress and drama school director frankly admitted that she did not know of anyone who she would trust to give out government money in the arts.

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OUTER BROADWAY THEATRE LETTER

College Theatre

Brandeis Univ, Waltham, Mass presented NYC Living Theatre co-producers Julian Beck and Judith Malina with $1500 Citation of Merit Award for "Recognition of promise."

The Long and the Short and the Tall by Willis Hall made US debut this week at Williams College, Williamstown, Mass, directed by Giles Playfair. ...The Overreachers by G F Reidenbaugh, Syracuse Univ, and The Loft by Al Brenner, a Yale Drama School graduate, to be presented in Apr at Academy Royale Theatre, Palm Beach, Fla.

Community Theatres

16 Long Island, NY theatre organizations have joined to raise funds for proposed Long Island Hall containing an 800 seat theatre and an 1800 seat concert hall.

Fred Fanton, Mullens, West, Va high school teacher journeyed to NY to receive gift of free costumes for forthcoming Ziegfield Follies production from Elcue Costume Co, 249 W 64, NYC. Profits to be used for youth activities work in area.

Winter Repertory

Joseph Anthony, now represented on Broadway by direction of four shows, will co-star with Shelley Winters in The Country Girl Apr 3 at Paper Mill Playhouse, Millburn, NJ, staged by Milton Katselas...The Fantasticks production at Del Prado Hotel, Chicago Apr 4 sponsored by Chicago ANTA...The Explainers a new musical revue by Jules Feiffer to open new Playwrights At the Second City cabaret-theatre, Chicago May 4...Calamity Jane stage version of 1957 film musical to debut May 27 at Casa Manana Theatre, Fort Worth ...Frenzy a new play by Peter Ustinov-Ingmar Bergman with Joseph Schildkraut, Everett Sloane to debut in May at Ivar Theatre, Los Angeles.

Award Dept.

Margo Jones Award of $250 set up by Jerome Lawrence- Robert E Lee to be made annually in Feb to producer who "best carries out the spirit of the late Margo Jones in encouraging new plays and new playwrights."

Summer Playhouses

Council of Stock Theatres, Inc Variety ad informs stars and agents that its 27 members will present their own star packages this season, eliminating " Middleman Packagers."

Chez Paree night club, Chicago, to be converted into a summer theatre...Hunterton Hills Playhouse, Clinton, NJ to open 15 week season in Jun, presented by new owners Greg Nallin, Carl Leswing, James Griffith...Albuquerque, N. M. Little Theatre founder Kathryn O'Connor to retire at end of this season, her 30th as producer.

Packages planned by Floyd Ackerman Assoc include-- Curious Savage with Spring Byington, You Can't Take It With You with Charles Coburn and a new revue starring George Jessel.

Playhouses

Orange Blossom Playhouse, Orlando, Fla new 365 $225,000 theatre to debut Mar 24 with Auntie Mame Year round season planned with professionals in leads and amateurs in smaller roles...Pabst's Theatre, Milwaukee, due to close May 31 unless City assumes management.

Road Tours

Nancy Andrews left 3 Penny Opera to replace Juanite Hall, Flower Drum Song, Chicago...Mrs John Kennedy attended Washington, D. C. performance and reception by French Embassy for Comedie Francaise twin bill of Moliere plays.

London

The Miracle Worker with Anna Massey and 12 year old Janina Faye drew critical and audience approval on opening...The Connection to close Apr 1 after five week run...The Tenth Man due Apr 14 with author Paddy Chayefsky on hand...Belle or the Ballad of Dr. Crippen new musical by Beverly Cross, Wolf Mankowitz, Monty Norman due May 4...Finian's Rainbow with Jeannie Carson, Biff McGuire and Bobby Howe to be presented in Apr.

Paris

Folies Bergere show, first new edition in three years, opened with 40 scene four hour production ...Uncle Vanya is new production of Comedie Francaise.

US Repertory

Brussels is next stop of Theatre Guild American Repertory Co after successful visits with its three productions in Barcelona and Madrid

Europe

Gate Theatre, Dublin, closed temporarily following death of its patron Lord Longford...Luther new play by John Osborne to be presented Jul 5 at Spoletto, Italy.

Tryout Calendar

Carnival- National- Washington- 3/9.

Far Country- Wilburn, Boston 3/13.

Happiest Girl in the World-Shubert, Philadelphia 3/13.

Current Road Tours

Fiorello!- Shubert, Cincinatti 3/20.

Five Finger Exercise-Geary, San Francisco 3/13.

Flower Drum Song-Shubert Chicago 11/14.

Hostage Civic, Chicago 2/20

Majority of One- Nixon, Pittsburgh 3/20

Music Man- Ford's Baltimore 3/13

My Fair Lady- Shubert, Boston 1/2

Raisin in the Sun-Blackstone, Chicago 2/27

Sound of Music-Rivera, Detriot 2/27

"CD" digests all theatre material in the 2100 pages of 7 NY daily papers of the preceding week." CD" subscribers are invited to inquire further for more specific data on current reviews, back reviews and out-of-town tryout reviews via mail, phone or drop by for coffee and facts when in NYC.